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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter maintains that young persons whose behavior patterns have been consistently outside the range of acceptability in a community face the same problems as do deviant adults. School personnel are often reluctant to cope with the proven behavior problems because the juvenile is returning to the same environment that spawned his nonacceptable behavior. A significant turnaround in student adaptation to school and personal behavior is possible when students receive individual attention and assistance from school-based paraprofessionals and from community agencies. A successful program in Kern County, California, is described that provides services to young people released from juvenile institutions and returned to regular school situations. (Author/MLF)

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JUVENILE OFFENDERS AND THE SCHOOLS

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Kern High School District

A paper from
"Theoretical Perspectives on School Crime"

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ABSTRACT

Young persons whose behavior patterns have been consistently outside the range of acceptability in a community face the same problems as do deviant adults. Society, to exist, must exclude nonconformists or bring them into some measure of conformity. Since young people who have not completed an education lack the preparation for success, they are doubly punished if they cannot return and complete school after any time spent in a juvenile institution. School personnel are often reluctant to cope with the proven behavior problems because the juvenile is returning to the same environment which spawned his nonacceptable behavior. A significant turnaround in student adaptation to school and personal behavior is possible when students receive individual attention and assistance from school-based paraprofessionals and from community agencies.

The surly smile barely escaped the curled lip and slithered across a face marked by past as well as impending eruptions of gigantic yellow-tipped pimples. The long-haired youth seemed to be hanging in the chair, suspended at the front edge of the seat by his belt and at the upper edge of the chair back by his neck. Legs in worn blue jeans stretched from the chair and seemed to fill the room. His manner mocked everyone in the area. The words came from the school dean, but they were the same words that TeacherCounselorDeanProbationOfficer YouthAuthority had hurled at him countless times, "Okay, kid, we'll take you back; but remember, one step out of line and out you go."

Introduction

That scene has been repeated in various schools throughout the country, for the juvenile returning to school after a period of confinement in a juvenile institution presents an imposing challenge. His behavior in the past has been sufficiently antisocial that society's only means of coping has been to place the young person in an isolated environment. The juvenile's own protection is a facade of unconcern and lack of conformity which creates an immediate suspicion that past disruptive

behavior will break out again. School personnel are understandably reluctant to bring trouble on campuses which seem to have sufficient problems unaided.

The great increase in juvenile delinquency which started after World War II coincided with a tremendous emphasis on educational attainment. In this modern society, the vast technological changes have left scant room for employment of unskilled workers; yet delinquency involvement has caused many youth to drop out or be pushed out of their education. The lack of a completed education has created a wasteland of human resources which might have been saved through early efforts to provide assistance. Federal and state sources have expended great sums to study the problems of delinquents, reduce the rate of delinquency, and alleviate the problem of high school dropouts. Little apparent effect has been evident. Not only has a current loss been caused by the juvenile's delinquent behavior--there has been the loss of potential unrealized because of the blocks imposed by delinquent behavior. Thus, there has developed a vicious cycle in which behavior causes deprivation which causes behavior which causes further deprivation.

In the decade between 1960 and 1970, the juvenile population of California aged 10 to 17 increased 45

percent; during the same decade, juvenile arrests increased 110 percent. According to the California Bureau of Criminal Statistics, by December 31, 1970, juveniles under supervision of California probation departments numbered 63,395. The rising rate of delinquency and probation is a concern which must be faced directly by educators, for a review of reports since 1919 indicates a consistently strong relationship between delinquency and school maladaptation (Silberberg & Silberberg, 1971). Of particular concern is the need to break the chain of behavior-deprivation-behavior so that those students whose behavior has caused them to become wards of juvenile courts might find a readjustment to their life and their education which could allow for completion of school and curtailment of antisocial activities.

The statistics provided by the California Bureau of Criminal Statistics (1970) show an increase of students under supervision of probation departments in 1970 as 84.5 percent greater than in 1960. Discouragingly, of the 63,395 juveniles on probation, 18,041 were subsequent delinquency petitions, indicating a sizable amount of recidivism. While the statistics are disturbing, the full story is not apparent since statistics from California's four largest counties (Alameda, Los Angeles,

San Diego, and San Francisco) were not included in the review. The total amount of juvenile involvement must be judged by the summary statistics, which indicated that 150,067 juveniles were admitted to juvenile halls during 1970-- 5 percent of the total 3,083,000 estimated population ages 10 to 17 in California.

The reaction to the juvenile problem in many cases has been similar to the title of an article in School Management; "How to Keep Incorrigibles Out of Your Classroom" (1965). The author stated that no school can "baby-sit" with incorrigible juvenile delinquents and do a good job of educating the rest of the students. He asserted that in thousands of high schools across the country teachers are confronted daily with the problem of handling hardened criminals in their classrooms.

In contrast to the attitude of rejection, a study of two large districts in Los Angeles county (Lambert, 1964) reported that often school personnel did not know a pupil was on probation or even committed to a youth authority facility, even though the delinquents in question committed two-thirds of all school violations.

Others have asserted that the child should not be discarded from the school environment but helped to succeed, for, regardless of background, success in school

gives an excellent chance for success in life. Glasser (1969), who had adamantly argued for the provision of individual concern for young people, strongly felt that

> Given the choice between dismissal and a good educational program, given the feeling that teachers and administrators care about education and students...a student will come to class and will appreciate the concern that has gotten him there. (p.5)

Glasser (1965) saw the characteristics of the girls with whom he dealt at the Ventura School for Girls as follows:-

(1) poor attendance and effort, school failure;

(2) many poor readers;

(3) lack of deep self-feeling; and

(4) taking the easy, irresponsible course when a choice is offered. Others have noted the same pattern in juvenile delinquency: a correlation between antisocial behavior and lack of school success. Truancy, for example, is one of the earliest events in delinquent behavior. And, contrary to the often-heard statement that "Most of the students dropping out of school today would never have entered high school fifty years ago," those students did drop out and did create a problem for the resources of

this country; many of the dropouts were students on probation (Silberberg & Silberberg, 1971).

Many authors have asserted, as did Kvaraceus (1959), that whether a juvenile is delinquent, delinquency prone, or socially maladjusted, there is a definite need for a person to whom the juvenile can relate. Did this relation exist within the court-provided framework? The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (1967) found that, in 207 juvenile courts surveyed, the frequency of personal contacts by probation officers with the majority of juveniles on probation was once a week or more often in 66 courts but twice a month or less in 141 courts.

Certainly, the probation officer did not see the ward frequently enough to fill a supporting role. One contact every two weeks or less frequently in over two-thirds of the court jurisdictions allows the ward tremendous latitude for unacceptable behavior, particularly when he is living in the same environment in which his previous difficulties originated.

A study of 400 socially maladjusted youth in Kansas City revealed that, at ages 11 to 13 while in the seventh grade, 30 percent of the group had police records and 3 percent had experienced juvenile confinement. Six years

later, when the ages of the group were 17 to 19, 68 percent had police records; the average number of arrests for the group was 5.6. At that time, 25 percent of the group had been institutionalized for some period during adolescence and 12.5 percent had been committed two or more times (Ahlstrom & Havinghurst, 1971).

Bloom, Davis, and Hess (1965) have also studied the school needs of juveniles who, deprived at the secondary level, have few clear vocational goals and lack the inclination to continue in a pattern which would enable them to make vocational choices. The combination of learning problems and motivational lack creates a situation in which many students have developed a level of hostility and rebellion against school authorities, teachers, and other adults which interferes with learning and which makes their own lives ones of continual resentment against individuals and forces around them.

Attempts To Meet The Need

A variety of approaches have been tried to solve the problem of the rift between the alienated delinquent or delinquency-prone youngster and the educational establishment--training schools, work experience, halfway houses, volunteer probation aides, cooperative agency approaches, juvenile court-directed services, special classes, and

various other alternatives. So far, no single approach has proved successful.

In Hood River, Oregon, one juvenile officer, financed by the court and the school districts involved, worked with school authorities and courts on juvenile cases as a liaison person. In subjective appraisals, all concerned agreed that the approach was sound. No objective evidence has been reported (Kvaraceus, 1959). Too many programs, however, are like the San Francisco Juvenile Bureau program in which officers were assigned by regions to cover schools, visiting each school at least twice a month even when there is nothing under investigation at the time (Kvaraceus, 1959).

Imagine the kinds of supportive service envisioned in a program in which schools were visited as little as twice a month, with the proud statement that these visits occurred even when nothing was happening; it seems that precisely the time to conduct supportive service was at noncrisis times when "nothing is under investigation."

Kvaraceus (1959) has reported another limiting situation, in Ventura, California, where a deputy probation officer worked as liaison between the juvenile court and the schools. His duties included advising the school authorities of the impending return of a

juvenile, some field supervision of serious cases and assistance in severe attendance and behavior problems. The restriction was that only serious cases were to be referred to the liaison officer. Once again, subjective appraisals noted increased school/court cooperation and satisfaction on the part of officials of agencies concerned.

In Flint, Michigan, and Portland, Oregon, better police/student understanding was said to have developed through the practice of including a nonuniformed police liaison officer on counseling teams when the teams were dealing with delinquency-related concerns (Robinson, 1971).

A community-based project in Stockton and Sacramento, California, had a failure rate of only 29 percent for a program of frequent contact, daily exposure, and educational services in a classroom at a center for expelled and school-problem children. The project reduced case loads for California Youth Auhtority parole officers serving juveniles who were routed back to the community instead of being placed in institutions. The emotionally supportive efforts identified community agents who worked with the youth. A conventionally handled group demonstrated, in contrast, a 46 percent failure rate. However, these results are at least partly artifact because the juveniles

were screened for maturity prior to placement in the program; thus, a very select group was identified and served with correspondingly select results (Keve, 1967).

One of the longest-lived programs established by juvenile courts was the Citizenship Training Group developed by the Boston Juvenile Court. For nearly 30 years, this program received juvenile court referrals to a center for a 12-week mandatory program of two hours daily after school for educational, recreational, and creative activity coupled with psychological testing and counseling. No program evaluations were reported (although the project's long life might be said to indicate effectiveness) (Keve, 1967).

Work-experience programs for juveniles have been another popular approach to rehabilitation. Salt Lake City, Utah, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Ely, Nevada, all placed students in job-training situations. According to subjective appraisals, about two-thirds of those involved made some form and degree of progress. Again, no systematic evaluation was undertaken (Keve, 1967).

One work-experience project for delinquents that was evaluated took place in Kansas City. Fifteen percent of high school boys were selected for a work/study program,

based upon screening for social maladjustment. They were placed in jobs during part of the day in carefully supervised situations. Analysis of the program included a six-year follow-up. The findings indicated that controlled work experience had not significantly reduced delinquency: only one-fourth of the participants had benefited (Ahlstrom & Havinghurst, 1971).

Morris (1970) has reported that a volunteer program in Royal Oak, Michigan, where interested citizens acted as sponsors for youth on probation resulted in only 7 percent recidivism; he felt that a 25 percent failure rate would be considered a good program by most authorities. He further found that

> Delinquency proneness, as measured by a nationally standardized test, is either held steady or decreased in our probationers when volunteers are used. When volunteers are not used, delinquency proneness increases between the beginning and the end of probation. (p. 117)

Another approach to reducing probation failure was tried in Dallas, Texas, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and other cities. The Minneapolis program was typical. Students on probation were selected to participate in a weekend ranch experience which would control the students

and take them away from their usual environment at a time when too much free time leads the probationer into trouble. Discussion and social, recreational, and educational group activities were included each weekend. Participation was mandatory. Of the 56 youth selected over a three-year period, 33 satisfactorily completed the experience; however, 11 of these 33 were recommitted within a few months after completion (Keve, 1967).

Halfway houses, which had a great deal of appeal in drug programs, have also been utilized in coping with the returning delinquent. Halfway houses for juvenile offenders have been modeled after the more successful adult halfway houses (Dimas in St. Louis, Roncalli in Minneapolis, Crenshaw in Los Angeles, St. Leonards in Chicago, and William C. Harness in Stockton) and supported by a combination of state and private financing. Juveniles were thus given a point at which they could make the transition back into the community through earning a portion of their livelihood and, most important, through group discussions, staff therapy, and other support (Keve, 1967).

Success in these homes depended greatly upon having the right person to direct activities and upon private

financing, which has proved to be a faltering source of support.

A variation of the halfway house was the large group foster home, such as those in Humboldt, California, St. Paul, Minnesota, and throughout Wisconsin. Strong emotional support with personal warmth depended on the skill of the foster parents, who provided a home for five or more children (Keve, 1967).

Another approach to the probationer was through in-school adjustment classes, variously termed as continuation, opportunity, or other descriptors which merely reflected that there was indeed an effort to provide rehabilitation through special classes. Since many students worked successfully at first only on a one-to-one basis, individual daily assignment work with students in opportunity classes has been tried in some districts with a gratifying response. Another in-school effort involved a team including a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, and guidance counselor working with 184 students; in the first year of its operation, the number of five-day suspensions was reduced by 139 over the previous year ("How Project ABLE cools," 1968).

Although adjustment classes for the delinquency-prone built self-esteem and offered relevant courses

coupled with remedial reading, the high cost of the programs, the need for a specialized staff, and the unknown results have been deplored.

Utilizing The Paraprofessional

Glasser (1965) addressed the problem of high cost with a challenge. His basic assumption was that in fulfilling human needs it is essential that a person be involved with others, at least one other person. Glasser then stated that to help problem children, we do not need highly trained professional people working in the traditional areas of case history, unconscious conflict, insight, and transference. Public schools require an approach in which many more helpers may be involved.

Since juveniles so often reject authority figures, the relation with a paraprofessional is easier to accomplish: the paraprofessional can relate to the student on his own level.

A strong statement of the need for paraprofessionals to assist teachers was made by Hymes (1968), who believed that teachers who encounter children with special problems must have helpers and that an aide gives a child emotional support because the aide can devote time to the child in isolation from the class group.

Robinson and Schmidt (1971) also said that paraprofessional help would greatly aid program development for needy students.

Through all the various approaches proposed for dealing with the needs of delinquent youth, there is one thread: the human concern which one individual shows for another. Any program proposed must somehow include that basic element if there is to be any measure of success.

Kern High School Program

Officials in the Kern High School District recognized that the needs of severely disadvantaged young people who have been committed to a juvenile institution (ranch school, California Youth Authority facility, or juvenile hall) are even more critical when they are released from those institutions. It was apparent that case loads, averaging 80 to 90 youngsters, carried by probation officers in Kern County, California, were too extreme for those officers to render intensive personal contact in educational planning and assistance for these most needy of the disadvantaged youth.

Two parts of an important program were developed. The county probation department responded enthusiastically to the suggestion of cooperative efforts to provide services

to returnees so that the youth could readapt to school and their home environment. A continuing contract with the Kern County Probation Department was drawn up to provide probation officers whose sole function was the vocational training support of young people aged 13 to 18 released from juvenile institutions and returned to regular school situations. The contract probation officers made personal calls at the juvenile institutions to learn of impending release dates so that they could contact the juveniles prior to release and also meet with school officials where the juvenile would be returning. These preliminary steps eased the transition for the young person and gave advance notification to school personnel. When the young person was released, the contract officer accompanied the juvenile to the initial school interview and scheduling.

The school district hired tutor/aides to be based at each school; they had daily sessions with the juveniles after their reenrollment in school. As the year progressed, tutors contacted teachers and counselors who worked with the juvenile, maintaining constant communication between school officials and the juveniles. The tutors arranged for vocational testing, work experience, and part-time employment. The daily personal contact between the juvenile and the tutor provided the juvenile

with the knowledge that someone was concerned. If the young person was absent, the tutor called the same day to inquire after the juvenile.

Acting together, the tutor and the contract probation officer held joint conferences with the juvenile every two weeks; the officer made weekly contact with each of his assigned returnees. During the year, vocational interest inventories and skills testing were completed for each student, and a personalized vocational training plan was developed.

Comparative data indicated that the project had dramatic effect in keeping the students in school. Prior to the project, only 10 percent of students returning from institutions finished the school year; after the project implementation, 66 percent of students returning from institutions finished the school year.

Over a four-year period the project, VITAL (Vocational Information and Training Assistance Liaison), was funded through the Vocational Education, Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and served some 600 students.

Evaluations of student progress, attitude, truancy, and retention in school all revealed significant positive strides. Grade point averages on a four-point scale

increased an average of .65, absences decreased, and attitude toward school and community improved (Paddock & McMillin, 1975).

What characteristics lead to success in bringing students from juvenile institutions back to school and keeping them there? Certainly, a nonhostile reception and a willingness to assist the young person in his adjustment are overwhelmingly important. Beyond that, support and caring (Tender Loving Concern, if you will) over all the rough spots the student must face are essential; each young person must have someone to whom he can relate. Coordination of all agencies which serve the needs of youngsters greatly aids in targeting assistance. The formula is fairly simple; the implementation becomes complex in the busy framework of a school situation.

It is important to provide second and third chances for those young people who seem destined to become the losers in our society. If we do not, we are all contributing to the losing self-fulfilling prophecy for those juveniles. There may, of course, be added cost. But either we pay a cost now to give preventive service or we pay a cost later to provide social or punitive service. In terms of the valuable contributions to be expected

from human life, the better investment would seem to be the former.

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